He Starts Out as a Professional Lecturer

FINDING IT UPHILL WORK

He Describes His First Effort and Tells How He Felt-His Sage Observations.

I've just been talking with a young men on the train. He squirted an hour med. In fact, I wanted to sleep, being most over aix weeks of slumber and counting on getting a small collection of wints on the way. He sat near me in the seat and hong his overcoat over my head so that his smoking tobacco sifted down the back of my nock and tickled the top of my sensitive head.



said he would like some day my said yes, I would look at it when I happened to be at his house. He said that would be unnecessary, as he had it with him. He opened his valise, which contained the manuscript, a pair of arctics and a lunch, and took out "Gleanings." He read quite a lot of it to me. "Now what would your judgment be

on that" he said "Ninety days and costs," said I as quick as a flach,

He said as he reluctantly got off the car that he was a great student of Mr. Riley, the Hoosier poet. "I don't believe Jim has ever wrote anything that I can't repeat, and, between you and me, a heap better than he does it. I use his Goodby, Johnnie; see you later,' in my

nest and sincere letter from a young man at Haccoon Summit, Tenn., asking about my own early experience and how I

It is a history of alternate failure and success, written with the heart's blood of the lecturer. It is a record of hope and indigestion, of ex-

his casy in America to say: "I will be because I will train my voice and warm the cold hearts of my fellows with my nice new upper register. I will train myself from an electricinary point of view, and I will write myself a lecture to fit the gestures that I have thought up. I will win for myself a place in the hearts of my countrymen at \$200 per pop, and committees shall say, "Lo! he is indeed a corker!" and the leading people of the town shall take me to their homes and give me of their preserves, and the committee shall meet me at the depot with a livery team."

It is easy to say all this, but it is not easy to do it. Before all this can happen the long dusty road that leads to public approval must be sprinkled with tears. The amateur lecturer must contribute many sobs and three sheet posters, and many an amateur manager must a set with reverses of his fortunes while the lecturer's cuffs are going through the same process.

Our best lecturers are too wealthy to lecture, and so the field is occupied pretty extensively by those whose fame superior to their lectures, or whose lectures are superior to their fame. So too often it is either "a small but delighted andience," or "a large and dis-

appointed one." Sometimes the lecturer entirely escapes criticism, while the audience gets a terrible reasting for its apparent enjoyment. This is one of the saddest sights I have ever witnessed. A bright young critic, who has had sometimes as high as a year and a half of experience as a thought molder, takes an audience of more or less mature people across his knee and gives it a well merited rebuke. I have known an audience after such an experience to charge its name and go somewhere else. No one who has never been an audience under such circumstances con imagine its chagrin when it finds by the paper that it has enjoyed a lecture which was a bitter disappointment to a

biase young critic.

Judicious advertising twenty-five years ago would have made any lecture a financial success, but now it will not. It is a queer combination of fame—ability to entertain and business sagacity -which together make up the sum of success m a box office standpoint now, and that has to be the test at least, for lochere committees and local managers do not love one who cannot draw. You are therefore to combine your falents as

a talker and as a draftsman. To start out as a lecturer and win worth and fame in this way is an up hill job, even though your lecture was written by some one in whom you have the numest confidence. Generally originality of thought and expression, which through the medium of the public press have attracted attention, are the first and strongest elements of success in the makeup of a lecture tour. Then should follow a complete study of the average audience and an effort to please its pe-

with a severe secident in the northern lation of his down here," woods of Winconsin, by which my leg was very much broken at the knee. The issected the orbit of a growup cyclone in use. "Stepping on a bright, new peal buggy ridden all day, made a few reof thunder," to quote from myself, I fell marks to the workingmen on reciprocity anits a long distance with very little ob- and delivered a notoriously unsound

NYE AND HIS JOB struction until I reached the earth, when I was shocked to find that I could proceed no further.

seed no further.

Starting up, however, I was horrified to find before I had proceeded two steps that my choicest leg had been broken just below the knee. After weeks of suffering at a village, to which I was carried by admiring friends, I was led to believe from the large number of people who came long distances to view the shattered himb that if I could get it on the stage, together with a few explanatory remarks regarding atmospheric phenomena, I would entertain and in-struct while possibly detracting atten-tion from the accursed ballet and thus

A New York manager had previously written me regarding the possibility of my lecturing, and I had been just coy enough to keep him interested. Thus as I began to get around on crutches I could public, so that those who had "read aft-er" me could also "sit under me." I wrote to this manager and told him that he might make fifty dates for me in desirable cities. in December and January at an enormous price. He wrote back to know what printing and press notices

I had one notice, which I sent to him at once, although he never used it. It was as follows:

"Last evening Mr. Nye spoke at the new rink here on the subject, 'Is or Is Not the Tariff a Tax?' The speaker arrived on the 8 o'clock stage from Tie Siding. He was the first one in the hall and by far the last one out of it. He speaks with great difficulty, owing to the fact that he is unable to think of things to say. Some think he will improve. The lecture was free, and several came in to get warm. Those who were already warm enough did not come in.

"The jamitor tells us that the lecture lasted over an hour. He thinks that if our people here had begun in time it could have been averted. He is going to resign as janitor if the owners of the building do not treat him with more

There were other notices that were bet ter than the above-notices that I had written myself-for I was more careful not to wound my feelings than the man

After a few weeks, greatly to the sur-prise of those who knew me, I got a telegram asking me my price for lecturing. The telegram came from a small but very active and thrifty place. I was not ready with my lecture yet, and my clothes were not done, so I wired back that I would charge \$300 and expenses. The answer by red message was that my terms were accepted with pleasure.

This only gave me two days in which to study my piece and finish my clothes. It was very annoying, but I could not honorably get out of it. Also by this time I had grown very tired of studying the lecture. It did not improve on acquaintance. I wondered how I could have seen anything smart in it on the start. Oh, how very trite and tart and tough it seemed as I studied it walking up and down in the granary, and how I wished that I had not beaten down the price of the young man who wanted to write a good lecture for me!

Why did I try to economize by writing my own lecture? Here was a young street. man who had written lectures for all the prominent lecturers of the country and eight dollars was all he asked. Why did I try to save eight dollars and thereby humiliate myself before the people?

Finally the job was done. The lecture instead of the lecturer was committed, and the new clothes came home with white basting threads in them. I had a dress rehearsal in the evening at home before I went to bed. One good, kind man went from my rehearsal to sit up with a lady who had been killed by her husband while at tea. He went rather cheerfully, it seemed to me.

All along the way to my engagement I could not be happy. Everything reminded me of my lecture. In my imagination I could see the audience, at first expectant, then disappointed, then disagrecable, then offensive and finally riotous. I could not eat anything. I did not feel hungry. I dreaded neeting for nearly two years, have tried physithe committee. I was tempted to get killed on the road, and though I needed the advertising I gave it up, for I could not think of any kind of death that would not make me ashamed to be laid out.



ANY RELATION TO BILL NYE? No one met me at the train. Then I began to hope that possibly it was all a mistake and that maybe I would not have to lecture. I went to the only hotel and registered. The landlord asked if I was any relation to Bill Nys. I said yes. "Well," said he, "he is here today; has been here all day."

"He has?" "Yes. Came in on the morning train. The committee mot him and took him up to see the artesian well, and visited the public school with him, and they say he spoke to the children, kept 'em laughing all the while, sassed the teacher. swore at the scholars and smoked the committee's cigars. Oh, he's a corkert

He lectures here tonight!" "Is he stopping here at this house?" "Yes, he stops here. Charlie, where did Bill Nye go to?" "Why, he was here just before the

train went out." linr teste.

"Well, s'posin you run up to No. 80
In the autumn of the year 1884 I met and see if he's in. Tell him there's a re-

Pretty soon Charlie came back and said that he was gone. Also his bright accident was due largely to an error in little enameled pertemonnaie. He had indement by which my own collectic gone out on the same train which brought me in. He had enjoyed himself at a tone when the cyclone's orbit was very much indeed, it is said. He had

speech before the Presbyterian synod, which was then in session there a speech

which I have been nearly eight years in trying to live down by an upright life.

I spoke on that evening at a great disadvantage. It had become noised about that I was a low, coarse thing, and that I had never been in good society much.
One man asked at the box office if it would be a proper place to bring ladies.
I do not know when I have been so pained. It is hard enough to lecture for

pained. It is hard enough to lecture for the first time anyhow; but, oh, how dis-tressing it is when one has been ma-ligned and misrepresented by an alibit. I was introduced by a man who was so afraid that he might accidentally be re-sponsible for my sentiments that he said rething a complex. nothing except in regard to the beautiful soil and climate of the town, and what a future she had before her, and what undeveloped resources she had, and how a little foreign capital would make her what she was destined in the no great distant future to become-the gem city of the continent.

I arose somewhat irritated and said that after the beautiful and deserved tribute and introduction just given to the gem city of the continent I was sorry to state that it was unable to be present this evening, and that I had been secured to take its place. Then I went on from that with my lecture, which sounded

strange and very poor to me. When any one snickered, it surprised and astonished me so that my very as-tonishment added to their mirth. I was so depressed and sad inside that it seemed to heighten the effect and add to what there was in the text that was of a humorous character. That air of intens gloom while on the platform is still with me today. It is natural and honest. It is not assumed. It was stage fright to begin with, and it has at last crystallized. into habit and has been honored by the name of "art." It is not art. It is th petrifaction of my early horror.



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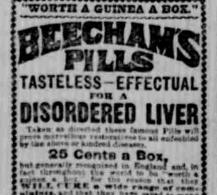
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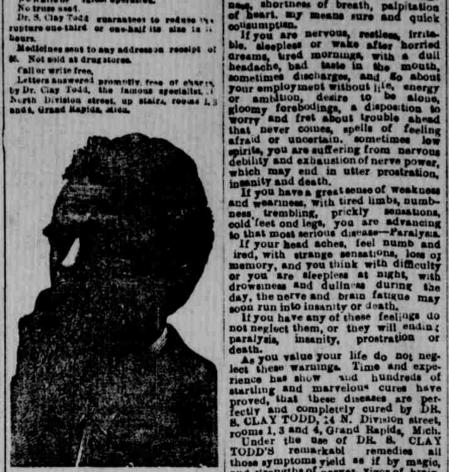
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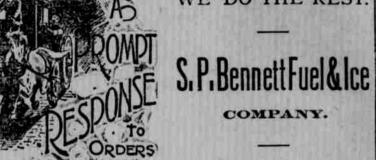
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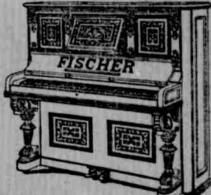
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